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ARGENTINA

The new military junta in Argentina is firmly in place and giving the impression that it intends to remain in power indefinitely.

Former president Peron, her secretary and adviser Julio Gonzalez, and several Peronist leaders are in military custody. While there have been reports that she would be tried on corruption charges, she probably will be allowed to go into exile in Spain.

Even as she was being deposed, junta President Jorge Videla was moving to set up the new government. A steady stream of official proclamations began flowing from military headquarters, reflecting the military's continuing preoccupation with terrorism. There has been little violence so far, but stiff penalties have been decreed for anyone who assists the terrorist cause. Security forces have been ordered to shoot anyone found interfering with public services.

Videla and the two other junta members, Admiral Massera and General Agosti, were sworn into office in a perfunctory ceremony yesterday morning. The government has banned political and labor union activity, closed congress, suspended the supreme court, and begun to appoint military governors for Argentina's 22 provinces.

The interim cabinet appointed yesterday is composed of relatively young, field-grade officers from the three services. The foreign affairs and economy portfolios probably will eventually go to civilians, while retired military officers will head the other six ministries.

The junta will have to turn to foreign governments, commercial banks, and international financial institutions for help in dealing with the severe economic problems it inherited. It will make every effort to avoid repressive measures that might damage its international reputation.

The top military leaders are friendly toward the US and will strive to improve Argentina's ties with Washington. They will be looking to the US as a source of investment and new capital to cover Argentina's huge debt payments and current-account deficit.

The next several months are likely to continue to be tough for US firms in Argentina. They will suffer from labor agitation, sabotage, and shortages of all kinds. The security risk for US personnel will remain high.

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Like his recent predecessors, both civilian and military, Videla has begun with the hope of restoring a sense of well-being to his badly fragmented country. Among its stated objectives, the junta vows "to restore morality and honesty, to eradicate subversion, and to provide initiative to foreign and national capital."

Former governments have failed to put muscle behind similar rhetoric, and Videla's task may prove even more difficult. The terrorists and Peronist labor are still potent forces, and runaway inflation is forcing even apolitical workers to support radical demands for ever higher wages. The new leaders will need the support of the foreign and domestic financial communities if they are to succeed.

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